

Strands of Life: Rapunzel's story

In the palace, the old King lay on his deathbed. As his life ebbed away, he summoned his only son, Prince Flynn, and bade him begin preparations to become King.

"But son," the King whispered, "there is one condition. Your new bride cannot be queen. How you set her aside is up to you, but set aside she must be, never to return."

Prince Flynn was horrified, although even he had heard the whispering about Rapunzel and her golden hair. Thick and lustrous, it grew like bindweed, and each day a team of elves spent hours plaiting and twisting it into high piles on her head.

Only magic could explain such hair. And a kingdom, everyone knew, cannot be ruled by magic.

That night, as Rapunzel combed out her hair, Prince Flynn told her of his terrible plight.

"Of course I love you," he said earnestly, "but only I can wear the crown. That is my higher duty, and so you are banished."

Rapunzel sobbed bitterly, and the next morning she and her elves left for the desolate lands beyond the kingdom. One day they came upon a wizened crone, who eyed the beautiful golden hair in amazement. "Rapunzel?" she exclaimed, "let down your hair! I once had hair like yours, but it was stolen from me, and now the land is desert." And so Rapunzel learned that the magic of her hair was its power to bring life, but only when it fell freely in flowing waves.

"Flynn dumped me in a heartbeat," Rapunzel told her elves, "but if he knew my power he would take me back. Hmmm."

And with that, Rapunzel flicked her hair, and she, the crone and the elves built a magnificent new kingdom, where they all lived happily ever after.